

VZCZCXRO0722
PP RUEHAG RUEHROV
DE RUEHCV #1060/01 2132210
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 312210Z JUL 08
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1546
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CARACAS 001060

SIPDIS

HQSOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
DEPARTMENT PASS TO AID/OTI (RPORTER)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/31/2028
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [VE](#)
SUBJECT: INTERNATIONAL PRESSURES MOUNTS ON BRV TO DECIDE
FATE OF INELIGIBLE CANDIDATES

REF: CARACAS 00989

CARACAS 00001060 001.2 OF 002

Classified By: POLITICAL COUNSELOR FRANCISCO FERNANDEZ
FOR REASON 1.4 (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (BRV) is growing increasingly defensive as international bodies are calling for it to rule on the constitutionality of disqualifying 272 candidates from running for public office in the November state and local elections. The Inter-American Commission of Human Rights' (IACHR) decision to accept the case of the ineligible candidates received prominent media coverage here. Likewise, reports that a group of Uruguayan parliamentarians plan to visit Venezuela to meet with Comptroller Russian on behalf of Mercosur's Commission on Human Rights has also generated significant local attention. Meanwhile, a thin-skinned BRV quickly criticized the international community's interest in the matter. As the August 12 deadline for candidates to register approaches and international pressure mounts, the politicized judicial system will likely make a show of adequately addressing the legality question. At the same time BRV officials will make clear that outside criticism is not welcome. END SUMMARY

Under the Microscope

12. (C) The IACHR's decision to admit a case against the BRV regarding the legality of the administrative electoral sanctions and its July 29 criticism of the two-year judicial delay in the case of ineligible candidate and Chacao Mayor Leopoldo Lopez have received significant media coverage. News of the IACHR's position and the sense of growing international attention to the cause of the ineligible candidates have helped boost national attention for the issue. Likewise, media reports that a group of Uruguayan legislators are considering visiting Venezuela to meet with Comptroller Russian and discuss the sanctions has also heightened local awareness. (Note: Un Nuevo Tiempo (UNT) party leaders recently urged Mercosur member states to speak out on the disqualified candidates (reftel).)

BRV on the Defensive

13. (C) A thin-skinned BRV has reacted negatively to the international attention the list of ineligibles has generated. The pro-government daily "Diario Vea" ran a front-page story July 31 mocking a group of protesters

outside the Supreme Court (TSJ) saying the small gathering was evidence that the ineligible candidates do not have support in Venezuela. "Vea" failed to mention that the group of supporters have organized daily demonstrations outside the TSJ for several weeks to protest the sanctions. Separately, on July 29, National Assembly President Cilia Flores accused the media of fomenting "lies," and claimed it was not true that Mercosur member states were forming a commission to discuss the fate of the ineligible candidates. She went on to accuse the media of having "false morals" and of supporting "corrupt" officials.

14. (SBU) In an apparent attempt to assuage international criticism that the BRV is not doing enough to address the issue, the Supreme Court (TSJ) summoned 15 of the disqualified candidates, including Lopez, who have entered cases calling for the unconstitutionality of the sanctions on July 31 to address the court. While the closed-door session was more for show than substance, the BRV seems intent on sending a signal that it plans to deal with the ineligibles on its own terms and rejects outside "interference" on a domestic issue. On the other hand, in statements to the press before the hearing, Lopez said the issue has "transcended Venezuela," and has reached a point where international attention is necessary given the lack of political will on behalf of the BRV. Lopez warned that if the TSJ does not rule by the August 12 deadline, the affected candidates will "ring an alarm that will be heard around the world."

15. (C) COMMENT: Increased international interest this week on the ineligibles' cause suggests that Lopez and other opposition leaders have had some success in rallying support on the international scene, maybe even more so than at home. Pressure from important international bodies could help

CARACAS 00001060 002.2 OF 002

persuade opposition parties and sectors of civil society to support the ineligible candidates more actively. Interestingly, the opposition endorsed on July 30 a gubernatorial candidate in Anzoategui state who is still on the Comptroller's list. Nevertheless, absent a "stay" from the IACHR, most local analysts believe the BRV will not change course on this issue. By holding the line, the BRV hopes to avoid near certain losses in Caracas and at least three key gubernatorial races. END COMMENT.

DUDDY